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# THE BACCALUAREATE

Delivered by Rev. R. B. Richardson, D.D.,  
LL.D.,

*President* OF LIBERIA COLLEGE,

TO THE GRADUATING CLASS,

IN THE PROVIDENCE BAPTIST CHURCH,

MONROVIA,

JANUARY 10, 1904.



LIBERIA COLLEGE PRESS,

MONROVIA, LIBERIA.

JOHN T. RICHARDSON, CHIEF.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS

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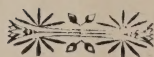
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## Hope in Christ.

Isaiah LX, I.—*Arise, shine; for thy light is come,  
and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

WHEN any of the sweet and solemn events of life are about to happen to some member of an affectionate and united family, the thoughts of the rest are naturally concentrated on him.

And in this, our college family, one event—one which is among the most solemn in life's history—has happened to six of its members: they have passed through a four years' course of mental, moral and religious training, and are declared worthy, and prepared to enter the drama of life as workers. Thus, have they stepped across that clearly-marked boundary which separates mental childhood from mental manhood.

We all feel with them; we hope in them; we have, all, prayed for them. Our thoughts are with them now: and though, I hope that with God's blessing my words to-day, may not prove wholly profitless to any, yet these are they to whom I would mainly speak, earnestly desiring that what I say may chime in with all that is most holy and most beautiful in the present music of their thoughts. To them this day and the day of their formal commencement will be a memory to the close of life; may they, also, to the close of life, remember that it was in Liberia College that they received their inspiration to a noble and useful life.

I shall now proceed to give them a few simple words of encouragement, of warning, and of hope.

That—without exceptions—as you are earnest, that you

desire, first of all; to consécrate yourselves to God and to the work of your race, and that the attitude of your souls is, at the present moment, an attitude of hope, I cannot doubt. It will be, at once, your duty and your happiness to cherish that hope; to keep it a-glow by the breath of prayer and the dilligence of activity; to suffer no evil influence to dim, or queneh it; for all the powers of evil, will in these days, be doubly busy for your ruin.

The loss of hope in a human soul is, the gathering of darkness; its increase is, the brightening of dawn. To be robbed of it, even in our poor earthly life is a misfortune. For though energy may be possible without it, serenity is not; though duty may be faithfully continued, happiness is gone. But hope in our earthly prospects matters very little, if its eternal treasures be garnered up where man cannot rob us of them. It was an ancient fancy that if the hues of the rainbow fell on the asphaltus, the flower lost every harsher element, and gained an unwonted fragrancy. Let hope, like the touch of the rainbow transform and glorify your hearts; and let it not be the evanescent bow which overarches the thunder cloud, but that the steadier iris which gleams above the cataract.

My young friends, may the love of Hope span the worst sorrow and tumult of your lives; and may it prove to you to be what Eastern fancy saw in it,—the bright and narrow pathway of just souls to heaven.

When a youth, in the happiest days of chivalry, was admitted into the noblest order of knight-hood, he spent his vigil with prayer and fasting in some lonely church beside his arms. And when morning came he bathed and clad himself in white robes as a symbol of purity; he knelt humbly, at the Supper of the Lord; the cross-hilt of his consecrated sword was presented to him; and with priestly benedictions and solemn services, the Bishop bade him to be humble in



all things, high in courage, strong in danger, patient under difficulties,—above all, to tell the truth always, to take Christ as his captain, and to do his *devior* to all the world. Then being clad in his armour, he received the accolade of knight-hood,—he was bidden to be loyal, bold and true,—and so, with courage in his heart, and holy vows upon his lips, he “rode forth in morning sunshine and faithful hope,” ready at any moment, in single encounter, or on Syrain battle field, to yield his pure soul to his Saviour—Christ.

It is, thus that I think of each of you, and of the work, both immediate and future which lies before you. The age of chivalry, indeed, is over; but that, thank God, was but a sunlit ripple on the abiding river. The accidents are gone, the substance remains. For its vigil in the church, you have had the prayer and instruction of earnest and devoted teachers of four long years; for the sword-blow on the shoulder, the smiles and encouragement of affectionate parents and kind teachers; for the vow of knight-hood, the christian resolve.

Purity, self-devotion and courage, as they were the knight's main duties, so are they yours; the chrismal fire of the sevenfold blessings is shed no less richly on you than on him; his armour was but the symbol of your panoply of God; his foes but the embodied representatives of the powers which assault and hurt your soul. You, too, are following Christ to the gathering battle; you, too, are riding forth in the hope that He will make you more than conquerors.

For the moment, you have felt as if all things were possible to you. And all things *are* possible through Christ who loves you; and, to the faintest-hearted of you, victory is certain if you fight under your Captain's banner, and in the strength which He will give you.

Now, if any knight in legend, or in reality,—if any chris-

tain hero in history or life,—did great and worthy deeds, what influences have sustained him? Whence did a Luther, or a Milton,—whence did a Whitfield, or a Martyn.—whence did a Judson or a Livingstone,—Or coming down to later years in our own country, whence did a Carey, or a Johnson, or a Benson, or a Teage, or a Day, or a Drayton, or a Parson, or a Warner, or a Payne, or a Gardner, or a Johnson, or a Cheeseman, or a King, or a Blyden, or a Gibson, or a Barclay win the mighty inspiration which made and makes their lives so true, their sword so irresistible, their hearts so noble, their words so strong? Not, assuredly, in Circean philosophy of the world; not in the foolishness of darkened imaginations which make a mock at sin; not in the haunts of the sensualist, or at the table of those who are full of meat,—nay, verily, but in the stern school of youthful self-denial, under the hardy discipline of laborious duty, in the fiery truths of prophets unglozed by the smooth self-complacency of Pharisees, priests and political stupes.

“Lift up your hearts,” was the voice that ever sounded in their ears; “we lift them up unto the Lord,” was, always, the fervent antiphon of their faithful hearts.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,”—they thought on those things. And you must think on them too, and on the heavenly sunbeams of such thoughts, you must climb the ladder of usefulness and to the Father of Light, who dwelleth in light unapproachable. With souls so inspired, you may hope indeed; hope not only that you may ever shrink from the coarser and viler temptations of the world, as from burning ashes that have fed by the corpses of the slain,—hope not only that you may tri-

umph over the subtler temptations of sloth and cowardice, and spiritual pride,—but hope that, by God's blessing you will be enabled to lead a life for higher and more heroic ideals than the vulgar and sleepy standard of the so-called religious world,—that God's grace may inspire you with such a passion for integrity and truth, that you, too, may be hereafter, among those servants of God and of the country, who spared no pains to lift humanity and who have inspired the souls of others by the conspicuous example of Christ-like lives.

Yes, my sons, such thoughts, such hopes are as the unseen seraphim who swing their holy incense in the spiritual temple; and such a temple your hearts should be. Greater are they who are with you than they who are against you.

Evil is not your nature, but it is its ruin; not the law of your life, but its apostasy; not the fulfillment of your destination, but its frustration. All good angels lean over you with their glittering faces; the silent company of the immortal spirits of the race, the house-hold and the city of God above are with you; the hearts of all *true* patriots beat in unison with yours. There is nothing high, there is nothing noble, there is nothing god-like, to which you are not clearly summoned, for which you are not naturally fit. "Fear not, O Jacob, my servant, and thou, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. Fear ye not, neither be afraid; ye are even my witnesses." Yet while you cherish to the utmost these high hopes, cherish them in humility, cherish them in trembling. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." You are buckling on your armour, not putting it off. If you do not learn the wisdom which is taught by fear—if you feel inclined to value yourselves over much, and say to others, "Stand aside, for I am wiser, holier and more exalted than you"—God may teach you by bitter ruin, that



your trust must be in Him.

In my life experience, my sons, I have stood on some mountain peak, Manding or Buckker hill, over which the dim mist rolled, and some times, through one mighty rent in that cloudy curtain, I have seen the blue heaven in all its beauty, and, far below my feet, the rivers, and cities, and ricefields of the planes sparkled in heavenly sunlight; but soon, and almost imperceptibly, as I gazed, the scene began to fade and waver as the thin edges of the mist crept together, and the gray atmosphere of the mountain was drawn around me, until for the vision and the glory, there was nothing but chilly vapour and drizzling rain. Even so may it be with you. It behooves you, therefore, to be careful and take heed.

Many a young knight, in his over confidence, has ridden forth in hope, to return in humiliation; many a young christian, in his unwatchfulness, has retired from life's battle, seamed and scarred, and in most shameful dishonor; many a young student, fresh from college with honor encircling his brow as it does yours, in pride and self-sufficiency, has dashed his brains out against the stump of arrogance. David, the pure and gallant lad, whom God took from the sheepfolds to lead His people, became, alas! a murderer and an adulterer. The same Peter who, when all were forsaking Christ, burst forth with passionate confession of His Messiah-ship, yet afterwards denied Him with scorn and cursing on that terrible night in the High Priest's hall. But oh! through what rivers of shame and agony had each of these to win their way! May God in His mercy shield each one of you, my sons, from such a fall; but oh! if you do fall, may He grant to you, also, even if it be through pain and ruin, a repentance as deeply-seated and as sincere as was theirs.



You have reached the first rung of the ladder of true manhood; but the ladder in some of your cases is long, and in some, shorter; but having climbed to the last rung, you will be at the top just the same. Climb, then, my boys, but climb legitimately; and remember that there is always, room at the top. Remember, that, aside from the devil and your own deceitful hearts, you will have three classes of enemies to oppose you: the class which you have out-stripped,—they are at your feet below endeavouring to pull you back; the class which you have reached,—they will, adroitly, try to throw you down; and the class which you are climbing to reach, in many cases, they will endeavour to push you backwards or to throw great stones on your legs and head. Be careful, then, and be sure to trust in that Arm that breaks nations.

The country is waiting for you, has waited for you; the church is cherishing the hope that in you is the help which she so sadly needs; the race wants leaders, and with streaming eyes and outstretched hands is looking up to you. What will you do, my sons? Your professors, who are so solicitous for you, and who have diligently instructed you, not regarding their own convenience, expect to see you shine forth in this country as a brilliant galaxy of stars in moral, religious, political and educational spheres where your energies and influence may be employed. Your president, whose heart yearns for you, as the heart of a mother, will rejoice in all of your triumphs and successes, and he hopes to live to see you place your feet upon the last rung of the ladder of eminence, and standing there as teachers sent by the God of Africa, dictate to the people the *modus operandi* for the Negro.

Your fellow students, whom you have worthily left behind, still digging in the pleasant fields of mentality, will

watch you carefully, and your success will be an inspiration to them.

You have left us; but we will pray for you. The hall of that ancient pile where you have been trained, will no longer give you accommodation as students. You will be absent from our "sweet communion, solemn vows and hymns of love and praise"—the refreshing morning prayer, when our hearts are lifted up to God, and when your voices, so sweetly mingled with ours in chanting the praise of Him whom we love and adore. We will miss you. I will miss you; for while I presided over you, yet you were an inspiration to me. Although your characters, and proclivities, and temperaments are different, still I have learnt and know them all, and could well adjust myself to the government that suited your individual cases.

The tie between you and the College, I trust, you will regard as sweet and lasting. A tie of love, friend-ship and interest.

"Blest be the tie that binds  
Our hearts in Christian love,  
The fellowship of kindred minds  
Is like to that above."

\* \* \* \* \*

When we asunder part  
It give us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart,  
And hope to meet again."

Meet again some where, and under circumstances, I trust, as pleasant as those have been in College. And, at last, spend an eternal reunion in the College of heaven, where all is light, intelligence, peace, and love, and progress.

But, one last word to you: If you will have hope in

Christ, you must follow Him. He said to His disciples in ages past, "Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead." Math. VIII, 22.

And whither must you follow Christ? In spirit, if not in letter, you must follow Him along the road He trod on earth, and that was a road of self-abnegation, of poverty, of home-lessness, of the base man's hatred and the proud man's scorn. Let us not disguise it; it is no primrose path of dalliance, but a hard road, hard and yet happy, and all the highest and noblest of earth have trodden it. And to be great and useful you are to tread the same road of humiliation, and wear the same crown of thorns.

"Has He diadem as monarch that His brow adorns?  
Yes, a crown in very surety, but of thorns."

Hath He marks to lead me to Him if He be my guide?  
In His hands and feet are wound prints, and His side.

Yes, follow Christ in His lovely character, for God's order of exaltation is by the way of humiliation.

"He that seeketh to exalt himself, shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

You are to shake off the baser objects of earthly desire as nothing better than dross. Has it ever occurred to you, that, all that we know of nearly all except three years of Christ's mortal life, from earliest boy-hood to full man-hood, is contained in one single expression, a word which no pious fraud has excluded from the Gospel of St. Mark,—*ho tekou*—"the carpenter?" *Oux outos estin ho tekou*; "Is not this the carpenter?" Yes, the home of a galilean peasant, mean and poor, containing, probably, but a single room, no furniture except a mat, and some clay vessels;—yes, the shop and the employ of a carpenter in the most

despised village, of the despised province of a despised and conquered land, this was the trade, this the home of our Lord and Master—the Son of Man—the Son of God, and for thirty years of toil it sufficed Him.

What a lesson of divine humility! We are heady, high minded, anxious; we lade ourselves with gilded dross; we daub ourselves with thick clay; we live and move and have our being in the infinitely little. But not so with Him, whom you are bidden to follow; for him the shop of the carpenter sufficed etc.

First, then follow Christ in self-denial, or humility; and secondly, you must follow Him on the road of toil. “My Father worked hitherto and I work.” was the expression from His blessed lips.

It was the first law of Eden, *work*; and though the work was changed to toil by a penal decree, even that toil, by faithful obedience, has been transformed into an honor and a blessing. To such a work you are called, and happy will it be for you if you obey the calling now. Your bright years of college life may be inestimably precious; years of large growth of knowledge, nobility, self-control; years, above all, of growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, which though they will speed away like a dream when one awaketh, may supply you with inexhaustible sources of inward serenity for the years of heavier responsibility and sterner care.

But on the other hand, they may be years which the locust hath eaten, years of debt, dissipation, extravagance, and frivolity, in which the youth uses his earliest liberty to offer to satan the very first fruits of his life; years such as Wardsworth has described of

“Idleness halting with his weary clog,  
And poor misguided Shame and witless Fear



And *simple pleasure foraging for death.*"

Thirdly, you must follow Christ in the strength of *Enthusiasm*; must be baptized in the Holy Ghost and in fire! For the dead of this world hate this fiery spirit—*Enthusiasm*.

Fourthly, follow Him on natural lines in social life, in politics and in religion.—Christ was eminently social and courteous without affectation; kind and gentle, long suffering, and forbearing; to use modern language, He was a courtly gentleman, and was not a respecter of persons—that is—He accorded to every man his due. He taught that the basic principle of politics should be righteousness. And what is righteousness? The word is Saxon from the root *rego* and means, properly, to strain or stretch, whence we get straight, or strained to straightness.

A further illustrated meaning is, purity of heart and rectitude of life; conformity of heart and life to the Divine Law. Who, then, gives the Divine Law, but Christ? He, then, is the Lawgiver for all of our conduct here below; and this thought suggests the propriety and wisdom of our third admonition to you: follow Christ in religion.

Now if you will learn of Christ in His word, and in his endowments and dealings with the various sections of the human family, you will find that He has given to them all, one word—one religion—while His endowments, in certain respects, have been different. And not only have His endowments for political conception been different; but His physical, moral, and mental endowments are different, of the races for the work which they are to do for the benefit of the human family. He has given one religion, called Christianity. That is the religion for all men,—of every clime and of every race. But there is a difference between the Christianity of Christ, and the so-called

Christianity which man teaches; and one is, always stumbling and making mistakes when he follows the shadow instead of the real substance. Races do not, and cannot find their God, not even in His Word, when they submit to, and wholly accept of the gloss put on it by another race, to them standing back to back—endowments different, instincts different, conceptions different, idiosyncracies different, *habitat* different, tastes, desires, and ambition, all, different. They profess to have found Him; but results prove to the contrary.

God is the God of nature, and He deals with His creatures, of all kinds, and in all conditions, on natural lines; and unless they will meet Him on natural lines, there will be no strength nor life imparted.

Liberia's difficulty has been, and is, that, while we boast of being politically free, we have no ecclesiastical freedom. In our religious and social arrangements, we are slavishly bound to foreign ideas. In fact, we are not politically free; for if we were, we would be bound in amity to other nations, only by the general laws that effect the family of nations; but at home, we would legislate, with the Bible in our hands and hearts,—according to our peculiar circumstances—circumstances of geographical position, racial proclivities, natural instincts; and upon such lines we would grow.

And, now, my sons, shall I call you by names? . . . . . Richards, Karnhga, Gibson, Barclay, Grimes, Hayes, "Arise, shine; for thy light has come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee."

*Osa estin alethe, osa semna, osa dikaia, osa agna, osa prosthile, osa euphema, ei tis arete kai ei tis epainos, tanta logzesthe.*

Be strong; equip yourselves like men; fear God; be true

to God, and to yourselves; be true to society; be true to the country; be true to your race; and remember that heaven is not attained by sudden flight, but we climb the ladder rung by rung.













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IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE HISTORY OF ARTS  
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